

Five Mistakes Made by Soccer Parents

 worldsoccer.about.com/od/youthsoccer/a/The-Bad-Soccer-Parent.htm

7/17/2011

The Bad Soccer Parent



There are a number of pitfalls soccer parents must beware when trying to help their child. Per-Anders Pettersson / Getty Images

By Stewart Coggin

Updated April 22, 2016.

As a [soccer](#) parent, you may harbor hopes that your child will make it as a professional, or you at least want them to perform to the best of their abilities. But a bad soccer parent has the potential to take all the fun out of the game for a child.

Horror stories involving parents attacking referees are by no means unheard of, and while that may be rare, there are several examples of poor conduct that should be avoided if you want your children to get the most out of the game.

Here are five of the worst things a soccer parent can do.

1. Push the Child too far

Soccer at a young age is about enjoyment. If a child is constantly being hassled from the sidelines, it is likely to affect their mental state and performance. Children withdrawing into their shell as a result of too many demands from pitch side is a negative consequence of a parent expecting too much. If you criticize a youngster for a poor pass or bad miss, their self esteem is likely to diminish and more mistakes will follow.

▶ 0:00

Inappropriate expectations undermine confidence, and such behavior means children are less likely to think for themselves. Let the coach give the advice and save constructive criticism for after the match. Pressure from parents and coaches is a primary factor in kids dropping out of the sport.

2. Undermine the Coach

Parents should go to games primarily to provide encouragement and transport for their children. Tactical instructions during play should be avoided at all costs because this is the job of the coach. If a child is receiving contrasting instructions from a coach and parent, it is likely to confuse them as they look to please both parties. The advice may be well meaning, but ultimately it is undermining for the coach and confusing for the child. If you want to be a coach, put yourself forward.

3. Badmouth the Referee

Ever see the scene in [The Sopranos](#) where Silvio Dante enters the field of play and bawls at the [referee](#), before kicking dust at him in a comical fashion? There may have been delicious irony to the scene, but berating referees is a common occurrence. It is also completely unhelpful. Think of the pressure indirectly applied to the child (and their teammates), and the shocking example it sets to youngsters prone to copying their parents and thinking such behavior is acceptable. Despite what Bill Shankly said, soccer is not a matter of life and death. Stay away from the ref and never swear.

4. Offend the Opposition

Referees are not alone in coming under fire from maddened parents. Abuse of opposition players, parents and supporters is another example of taking the [game](#) too seriously. It is just plain embarrassing when a parent feels they have the entitlement to berate anyone they like. When disagreements between rival parents degenerate into slanging matches, no one looks good, while slating a child on the opposition team is shameful.

5. Be a Know-it-all Parent

Some parents act as if they invented the game, giving the child an inferiority complex in the process. The parent who recoils all their great matches while affording the child little praise or encouragement is a bore. Parents may play the game themselves, they may watch matches or even possess coaching badges. But those who provide a constant analysis of what the child is doing right and wrong risk taking the fun out of the game and turning them off the sport altogether. Parents who discourage skills and expression and instill a 'win at all costs' mentality into youngsters also undermine coaches attempting to get children playing soccer the right way. Soccer at youth level is less about results and points, and more about enjoyment.

How to be a Good Soccer Parent



There are a number of things you can do to be a better soccer parent. Jerod Harris / Getty Images

By Stewart Coggin

Updated November 01, 2015.

The influence of soccer parents in developing a child's game cannot be understated.

The enthusiastic and encouraging parent who plays soccer with their child, supports them in the youth leagues and offers advice off the field can only aid their development.

Here are five positive courses of action a soccer parent can take to help their child.

1. Support Child on and off field

Soccer at a young age is primarily about having fun and arguably the most important role of a soccer parent is to be enthusiastic and supportive. The best players in world soccer will tell you how they played the game obsessively from a young age, and you can help your child by practising with them regularly and developing drills. Just a few minutes passing and [dribbling](#) each day could benefit your child dramatically. Provide emotional support, encouragement and constructive feedback. It is, of course, important not to contradict the coach and confuse the child, but being available to offer advice is crucial.

▶ 0:00

Ensuring the child maintains a healthy diet is also key.

It is important to attend a child's games. This may not be possible every week, but being there to give encouragement is one of the most important aspects of being a soccer parent. Parents should ask their children if they actually want to be cheered on during play; some could think of nothing worse. Keep on-field instruction to a minimum because this is the coach's job. Providing transportation to games is also a necessary requirement of a soccer parent, even if it can lead to less free time at weekends. Volunteering for club duties and assisting coaches when necessary are other ways you can support your child.

3. Learn the Game

Parents should also look to build on their own knowledge of the game. Attending matches with your child is an effective way for you both to build up an understanding of the sport because it enables you to discuss certain plays which you have both seen. Watching on TV, reading about the sport and instructional videos can all further your understanding, enabling you to pass on useful tips to your child.

4. Purchase Soccer Aids

Provide your child with the means to learn more about the game. Installing a set of [goalposts](#) in the garden can only help, while rebounders are an excellent way to improve control. There are some worthwhile videos and books available, while sitting down with your child and watching professional soccer matches is also an invaluable way to develop their understanding.

5. Show Respect

Once at matches, it is important to conduct yourself in the appropriate fashion. Only speak to the [referee](#) and linesmen if you intend to be complimentary, respect the opposition and keep a reasonable distance from the field (sitting three to five yards back from the sidelines is a rule in many youth leagues). Set a good example, because children copy the actions of adults.